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## Book Review: *The Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush* By Brian McCall

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*Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush*, McCall, who equates power to “a social game,” boldly claims that the Texas governorship stands as among the best laboratories for any study of human behavior. McCall attempts to use that laboratory to make a claim about the effectiveness and legacies of the men and women who have served in the highest elected office in the Lone Star State since 1962, current Texas Governor Rick Perry excluded. Ultimately, however, what the reader gets is a reasonably objective, but reasonably safe, simple, and superficial overview of eight Texas governors, their political times, and their political legacies.

At the heart of McCall’s premise is that the governorship of Texas is, by design, a weak office, but that those elected to the office demonstrate their power by setting legislative agendas and by casting a vision for what citizens and their representatives should prioritize. McCall’s premise and subsequent arguments make sense. He is insightful and makes a nice contribution to the literature of modern Texas politics simply by trying to understand the office of governor within the broader state and national political contexts. What is disappointing is that apart from this premise and his main argument, however, McCall’s chapters seem less focused on supporting these claims and are, at times, disorganized. Instead of offering eight successive case studies consistently focused on assessing varying uses of power, he treats the reader to a series of interesting anecdotes and insights into personality quirks, ironic and amusing quotations, tales from the campaign trail, and somewhat random snippets on administration goals, policies, and achievements. The chapters are disappointingly thin, though this may be the product of restrictions placed on the author by his publisher. The chapters on John Connally, Preston Smith, and Dolph Briscoe are especially slim, while McCall’s treatments of Bill Clements, Mark White, and Ann Richards provide more evidentiary meat and seem more closely related to his objective of demonstrating creative uses of power in the Texas governor’s office.

Despite such shortcomings and the occasional error—including the regrettable assertion on page 46 that Bill Clements became the first Republican, in 1982, to win the governorship of Texas since Reconstruction (he won this important victory in 1978 and lost in 1982, before winning a second term in 1986)—McCall’s book should be praised for its concision, smooth articulation, and easy manner. Texas political buffs should enjoy it as a quick read, but scholars interested in a weightier analysis should prepare to use this study as a springboard into deeper waters. **Sean P. Cunningham**, *Department of History, Texas Tech University*.

**The Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush.** By Brian McCall. Foreword by William P. Hobby, Jr. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. xi + 163 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 cloth.

According to Brian McCall, a Republican member of the Texas House of Representatives since 1991, the governorship of Texas is an office designed for individuals with the ability to project power in creative ways—beyond the mere execution of expressed authority, and with the complementary skill of a strong vision-casting and agenda-setting leadership style. Put another way, in *The*